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## ON MOOR AND LOCH.

ABOUT eight o'clock of a June morning the train draws up at a small station within a short run south of the Scottish metropolis. It is not a typical June morning. There has been a fortnight's drought, followed by two days of rain—the latter rejoicing the heart of the agriculturist and the angler; but yesternight the rain ceased, and its place has been taken by a gray mist, or *haar*, which the east wind is bringing up from the German Ocean. No angler loves mist. Is it not set down in the angler's book of common-law precedents, that in the case of *Man versus Trout*, this obscure element is to be construed in favour of the defender? The station at which we alight is situated in an upland valley, shut in on the north and west by the mounded Pentlands; but this morning their outline shows only like a denser and darker bank of clouds in a gray waste of cloudland. Down into the valley also, thin streaks of mist are creeping dimly and slow, groping their way forward with long dripping fingers, like a belated band of midnight ghosts which the morning light has struck with sudden blindness. To the south-west, the Peeblesshire hills are less obscured, but there is floating over them the dull glaze, the leaden hue, which makes my companion sadly prognosticate thunder—and thunder to the angler's sport is as fatal as mist.

It is indeed very far from being a typical June morning. The earth is gray, and the sky is gray; and the trees and hedgerows that flank the fields and overshadow the cottages and the little inn, are not musical with the song of any bird. There is even in the air a touch of the east wind, that fiend of the North Sea who comes to us annually with the crocus and the primrose, and spends at least three months of his baneful existence in tying innumerable knots upon human nerves. His sublime excellency the Sun is doubtless up, as his custom is, long ere now, but this morning he wilfully persists in keeping his chamber. All this is marked in the time we take to alight

at the railway station, give up our tickets, and, shouldering basket and rod, set out towards our destination for the day, which lies over this long ridge to the right.

Everything is very still—with the soft stillness of a misty summer morning. Except for the noise of the train we have just left, as it goes coughing hysterically out of the station, one might almost hear the grass growing. The recent rain has washed the dust from leaf and flower, and the fields of young grain are in the reawakened freshness of early growth. The pastures have drunk in the moisture; and the cows that stop feeding for a moment to gaze on us with large soft eyes as we pass, return with fresh zest to their juicy morning meal. The watchdog at the farm salutes us, as is his wont, with a little gruff language; not meaning any great harm perhaps, but only in the way of duty. 'You are not beggars,' he seems to say, 'and don't want any strong measures to be taken with you. But you are strangers, and I dislike strangers. Don't stand and look at me so, for that only irritates me. Good-morning, and be off with you!' In a few minutes we reach the top of the ridge, and see the long line of the Moorfoot Hills girdling the south and east. They are much clearer than the Pentlands behind us, and we have hopes that a southerly breeze may spring up; for along the south-eastern horizon, between the hills and the low mist-cloud above, there is a clear line of light—the *weather-gleam*, as the Border shepherds poetically name it—showing where the wind is breaking through the haze and uncurtaining the hills.

Our road for three or four miles lies straight before us; for the most part, through a bleak barren moorland. The ditches at the sides, which serve to drain off the stagnating black bog-water, have an abundance of bright green mosses and water-plants on their shelving sides and marshy bottom. There is a broad waste of peat-moss all round, cracked and broken with black fissures, the higher patches covered with bent-grass, hard and wiry, brown and dry, and only

here and there showing thin blades of green. One wonders what those straggling ewes find to eat amid the general barrenness, and how they manage to maintain themselves and their merry lambs, tiny, black-faced, and black-footed, that frolic around them. Yet this wild waste bears promise of beauty ere the winter is on us; for the upper margins of the ditches and the tops of the knolls are crested with thick bunches of heather, which, though scarcely noticeable now, will one day shake out fragrant bells in the autumn wind, and flush the moorland with a purple glory. Far away to the left we hear the jangling call of a bird—'liddle-liddle-liddle'—rapid, bell-like, long-continued. It is a familiar sound during the summer months to the wanderer among the hills, arousing, as it does, all the other birds far and near as if with an alarm-bell. The call is that of the sand-piper—in some places known, from its cry, as the 'little fiddler,' in others as the 'killieleepie.' It is one of our migratory birds, reaching us from the south in the month of April, and starting on its travels again, with its young family, in the autumn. Among the other bird-calls which its wild, startling cry has awakened, is a plaintive 'tee-oo, tee-oo,' sounding eerily over the heath. It is the voice of the graceful redshank, which has left the seashore, as it does every spring, and come up with its mate to the moors to spend their honeymoon and rear their young brood; and by-and-by it will lead back to the sandy shore a little following of red-legs, who will learn to pick crustaceans from the shallow pools, and prepare for a journey to the hills on their own account next spring. On before us, in a clump of firs on a distant height, we hear the deep note of the cuckoo, booming out with its regular cadences, calling to mind the oldest lyric in the English tongue:

Summer is i-cumin in,  
Loud sing, cuckoo!  
Groweth seed,  
And bloweth mead,  
And springeth the wood noo.  
Sing, cuckoo!

All this is very well, but it is not the business of the day. These are but the accidents, or rather the pleasant incidents, of the journey; and as we reach once more an oasis of cultivation, we know that the water for which we are bound lies close at hand. The day is gradually losing its misty moodiness, is indeed slowly brightening up. There is now a light but decided breeze from the direction in which we lately saw the weather-gleam appear, and when we come in sight of the lake we find its surface shaken with a thousand laughing ripples. The sun has not yet looked out, but we can see, from the transparent whiteness of the clouds at a certain spot, that his majesty may soon be expected to show himself. The mist has quite lifted, and save that the higher peaks of the Moorfoots are each capped with a misty cloud, there is little trace here of the haze which still hangs thick on the northern hills behind us.

At the water's edge, our interest in the scenery becomes of secondary moment. We are intent on other things. We look anxiously across the surface of the brightly rippling water, but not

a trout rises to the surface, and not a splash is heard or a ring seen to tell that the finny tribe are there. Knowing, from mournful experience, what it is to be left at the edge of a loch when a dead calm settles down upon it, and your flies are no longer of use, we have brought some worm-bait with us; and so, in order to lose no time while the preliminary work of making up 'casts' and donning waders is going on, we put on a Stewart tackle baited with a nice red-bodied, black-headed worm, which we plant in that part of the water where worm has already been known to us to kill. As we make preparations for the further work of the day, we cast quick glances from time to time towards the uplifted end of our rods where they rest over the water; but, alas, they moved not nor 'bobbed.' Worm was evidently not in demand with the Fario family as a breakfast commodity. At length, a sudden splash; and there, about fifty yards out from the shore, we see a fine trout just dropping back into the water. The 'feed' has begun! The sun had indeed been out for a short time, and this was a signal for the night-chilled insects to come out also, and these in their turn, dropping upon the surface of the water, signified to Master Fario that breakfast was on the table, and he presently piped all hands to the repast. In a few minutes more the lake was dimpled and ringed with the splash of the feeding trout.

There is no time to lose now. The Stewart tackle is discarded, a cast of flies is presently made fast to our line, and we are ready to begin. My friend goes a little further afield—if this term may be used in water parlance; and I am left to do what I can on my own account. Stepping into the water, and moving gradually forward till I get deep enough, I cast carefully from side to side, in hope of attracting the attention of some one of the trout that are rising everywhere before me. Five minutes pass, ten minutes pass, but without success, and I am beginning to doubt if my selection of flies is good. By-and-by I see a trout rise out there in the place where my flies should be; and the quick touch along the line, as if something had suddenly grazed it, tells me that a trout has rushed at the lure, and missed. There is hope in this, and I go on with fresh vigour. A few casts made over the same spot with as much adroitness as is possible to a clumsy fly-fisher, brings its reward. There is a sudden tightening of the line, and at the same moment, a dozen yards ahead, a big yellow trout springs curved like a bow from the water, and falls back again with a heavy flop. He is on! An aged countryman on the point of the bay opposite, waiting to see if perchance his worm-baited rod will bob, has witnessed the plunge of my captive, and is all intent on the issue. 'Gie him time!' he shouts across the water. 'Canny wi' him for a bit, and play him weel. Dinna hurry, dinna hurry.' The advice is not unneeded, for I am nearly fifty yards from the shore, and there is moreover midway a bank of sand only slightly covered with water, through which the green rushes are springing up. How will I get him over that reef? I wind up slowly, while the captive makes vigorous attempts to free himself

from the deadly hook—now springing out of the water, now curling and twisting serpent-like along the surface, then plunging for a moment into the deep black water, his yellow side gleaming like a sword-blade as he shoots below. It is the supreme moment. In a little his efforts slacken, and he comes oftener to the surface. I make slowly for the shore, still winding in. I am over the sandy reef with its dangerous reeds, which I fear may strip him from the hook. At last I have him safely through them, and he allows himself to be drawn quietly over the remaining shallow to the shore, and there he now lies—on dry land—a speckled beauty of three-quarters of a pound, his spotted sides gleaming like gold in the sunshine.

With cast put once again in order, I am into the water for a second trial. This time I avoid the sandy reef with its reeds, and keep clear water between me and the shore. The lake is deep here, and I cast slowly, letting the flies sink a little, that the deep-feeding trout may have a chance to see and seize them. I have succeeded in raising one or two, but they do not seem to be in earnest; and am in the act of withdrawing my line preparatory to casting again, when I find that a trout has taken it. But his tactics are not the same as those of the former one. He does not leap out of the water, and I only know by the strain on the line and the curve of the rod that he is on. This is only for a moment, however; for I have caught a brief glimpse of him as he dives down into the deep water, making straight for his old lurking-place under a steep bank a few yards in front of me. As he thus rushes towards me, the line slackens, the rod straightens itself, and I reel up hastily, fearing that he is off. But no; he is only sulking; for as the line shortens, the tension is resumed, and presently he is obliged to rise once more to the surface; and there he is now, gyrating and whirling in coils of glittering beauty. He is not so vigorous as his predecessor, and in a little his strength is exhausted, and he moves quietly to the shore alongside of me, not above a yard from my foot. He is as large as the first trout, but not in quite such fine condition, being flatter about the shoulders, and having a slight suspicion of lankiness in the sides. Another fortnight of fly-diet and he might have scaled a pound.

I fish on for another hour or two, with always some occasional success, and have, angler-like, begun to estimate the weight of my basket at the day's end—counting, of course, my trout before they are caught—when, alack and well-a-day! I begin to be cognisant of the sad fact that the breeze is gradually dying down, and that the glorious ripple on the water is gliding away into a soft glittery waviness, not more pronounced than the zigzags on watered silk. In a short time the breeze has actually died off, and the water of the little bay in which I stand lies smooth and clear before me like a sheet of polished steel. Alas, what can angler do in such a strait? You may deceive the trout with your artificial flies when the breeze is blowing and the ripple is strong; but the advantage is all on the side of the finny ones when the wind falls and the ripple ceases. You may cast your flies with as gentle a hand as may be; but his

quick eye sees something more than your flies, and he knows from experience that a respectably born and bred insect, fresh from its pupa-case, does not come out for a sail on the water with a yard or two of shining gut trailing behind it, or go about leading three or four other of its fellows after it in a string. No, no; trout have learned a thing or two under the operation of the law of heredity, just as we, his human—or, if you will, inhuman—captors have done. We may therefore reel up and take to dry land, till it pleases Eolus again to send us a prospering breeze.

As we sit on the soft grass and eat our lunch, we can note the aspect of things around us. The sun is shining steadily down with all his summer brightness and fervour, and the still air feels sultry and close. As you look along the surface of the calm water, you can see the heated air radiating from it like a shimmer of colourless flame. The white farmhouse on the opposite side basks serenely at the foot of the hills that overhang it; and a warm dusky haze floats over the neighbouring ravine, where an ancient stream has cut its way down through the lofty range. Not a sound breaks the stillness of the air, not a wavelet disturbs the glassy line of the beach. By-and-by there arises a low buzzing sound, gradually increasing in intensity, till you almost think it must be some far-away railway engine blowing off steam. You look up, and there, on either side of you, a yard deep as far as you can see, is a colony of innumerable midges disporting themselves in the hot air. There must be millions of those tiny creatures, the combined action of whose little wings can send such a hissing through the stillness. Shoals of them whisk round your head, poking into your eyes and ears, and tickling your face and hands. A whiff or two of tobacco-smoke comes in as a handy expedient to drive off the insignificant troublers; and the pipe, besides, is wonderfully soothing as you rest your tired shoulders on the grass. But, hark! what is that long low rumble coming up to us from the far south-west—over there where Dundreich raises his brown summit in the hot haze, with a leaden-coloured sky in the distance behind him? My trusty comrade was right in his morning prognostication: we are in for thunder.

There is in reality no wind; but, as frequently happens in mountainous districts even in still days, occasional cold currents of air gravitate from the hills to lower levels; and yonder is one playing over the surface of the lake now, just round the corner of this land-locked bay. We cannot afford to miss even this temporary ripple; for if the thunder comes near there will be an end to sport for a few hours to come. As I step along through the patches of rushy grass that grow by the margin of the lake, I see a small bird glide quickly out of one of those patches and disappear with suspicious celerity and quietness behind another a few yards off. I have not lost in middle manhood the bird-nesting instincts of boyhood's years, and I am certain, from that bird's quick, low, quiet mode of flight, that it has just risen from its nest. A few minutes' search confirms this; for there, beneath a patch of long grass, is the little cavity, lined cosily with dry grass and hairs,

and five small oval dusky eggs, mottled with reddish-brown dots and blotches. It is the nest of the yellowhammer. I lift one of the eggs, which feels smooth and warm, and think for a minute how best I might carry it home with me to little town-bred bairns that scarce ever saw a bird's nest. But I conclude that I cannot possibly carry the egg home unbroken, and so return it to its place beside the other four; where, in due course, if boys and rats and weasels let it alone, it will produce its gaping addition to the family of yorlings. A little further on, I descry a small sandpiper flitting before me along the shore, poking with its lance-like bill into the sand, and wading leg-deep through the shallow creeks, occasionally flying a yard or two, just to show me its long pointed brown wings and its breast of snowy white. It is the dunlin, a gay, active little fellow; and I can see that its mate is waiting for it a short way ahead, and when they meet, they make a dip or two to each other, by way of familiar courtesy, and then disappear together round the bend of the shore.

I have reached the point of the promontory beyond which the water shows a temporary ripple, and am into it in a trice. My success is greater than I had anticipated, for I scarcely expected a rise. At the third cast, and just as I am drawing out slack from my line in order to make a longer throw, my lure is seized, and a bright bow of silver shoots up a yard above the water. It is not a yellow trout this time, but one of the Lochleven variety, with some thousands of the fry of which the noble proprietor of these fishings stocked the lake a few years ago. They are vigorous fellows these Lochleven trout. Five times did this one leap straight out of the water before I had him on the shore; and even then, he nearly escaped. He was being guided through a shallow creek running into the lake, when I noticed that he had succeeded in unhooking himself. Had he not had the strength played out of him, he would have been off into the deeper water like a streak of light. But now he is weak and confused, and aimlessly pokes his nose into the bank, giving me just sufficient time to get between him and the lake and throw him out with my hands. He is a beautiful specimen of half-a-pound, finely spotted, his gleaming sides of a rich creamy whiteness, with a subdued pink flush shining through.

But why prolong the story? The thunder came nearer, though it did not break over us; and by the time the hour arrived for us to re-cross the moor, under the westering sun, to the little station we had left in the morning, my companion and myself had—not *big* baskets, as some baskets are counted—but baskets big enough to send us home well pleased and contented.

There are two ways of going home from a day's fishing (we do not refer to roads or means of travel, but to moods of mind). The one is as we come home now; the other is when we come home 'clean'—that is, with nothing. In the morning we have started with no idea but what relates to the fish we are to catch, hope being naturally in the ascendant. But in the evening, if we have had a bad day's work, we are in a different mood, with our ideas much enlarged beyond that of merely catching trout.

We suggest and enumerate to each other, with extraordinary facility, the compensating advantages of our position. We have had a day in the open air; we have had vigorous healthy exercise for the shoulders and arms (which are sore enough, perhaps, in all conscience, though we would not for our lives admit it); we have enjoyed the sights and sounds of nature, and have something like a triumphant feeling of superiority over our poor town companions who have been all the day in chamber or workshop, with nothing better to inflate their lungs than the smoky city atmosphere, and nothing more to delight their ears than the monotonous jingle of tramcar bells and the rattling of cabs over the stony street. Our compensating advantages are immense! Sorry we have not caught more trout? Pooh, nonsense! What have trout to do with it, except as an inducement to go out for a day to moor and river? Do you take us for fish-mongers?

And so, self-consolated, and weary enough, we regain the city with its flaring lamps and crowded streets, and go home to tell our experiences, and dream of alder-shaded banks and silver streams, and the landing of bigger trout than are ever likely to charm us in our waking hours.

## BY MEAD AND STREAM.

### CHAPTER XXXVII.—DOWN BY THE RIVER.

THEY were silent until they reached the stile at the foot of the Willowmere meadows, where they were to part.

The information which Mrs Joy had given them was a source of special anxiety to Madge, apart from her considerations on Pansy's account. If Caleb had really determined to leave the country at once, Philip would lose his most able assistant in carrying out the work, which was already presenting so many unforeseen and unprovided-for difficulties, that it was severely taxing the strength of body and mind. Besides, the few men who still maintained a half-hearted allegiance would take alarm when they found that even Caleb the foreman had deserted, and abandon their leader altogether. Madge was afraid to think of what effect this might have on Philip. Although he had striven hard to hide it from her, she had detected in his manner undercurrents of excitement, impatience, and irritability under which he might at any moment break down. His mind was much troubled; and the knowledge that it was so had been the main inspiration of her earnest appeal to Mr Beecham to help him.

She sympathised with Caleb, and understood the bitterness of his disappointment by the resolution he had so hastily adopted. He was casting aside what promised to be an opportunity to rise in the world in the manner in which he would most desire to rise—with his fellow-workers; and abandoning a friend who needed his help and who, he was aware, held him in much respect. On Pansy's account she was grieved, but not angry; for although she had been misled by her conduct towards Caleb, as he had been, she would not have the girl act otherwise than she was doing, if she really felt



that she could not give the man her whole thought and heart, as a wife should do. But there was the question—Did she understand herself? The sulky insistence that she would not have him seemed to say 'yes;' but the pale face and quivering lips when she heard that he was about to emigrate seemed to say 'no.' A few days' reflection would enable her to decide, and in the meanwhile some effort must be made to induce Caleb to postpone his departure.

'You will think about all this, Pansy,' she said when they halted by the stile; 'and to-morrow, or next day, perhaps, or some time soon, you will tell me how you have come to change your mind about him.'

'It is better he should go,' answered the girl without looking at Madge.

Pansy did not take the shortest way home. She passed between the dancing beeches—their bare branches had no claim to that festive designation, unless it might be a dance of hags—and under the blackened willows which cast a shadow over the little footpath by the river-side. Lances of light crossed the path, and seemed to be darting out towards the silver shields which the sun made on the running water. The lances of light dazzled her eyes, and the shadows seemed to press down on her head; whilst the sharp tinkle made by the rippling water in the clear atmosphere sounded discordantly in her ears. She saw no beauty anywhere and heard no pleasant sounds.

She was walking against the stream: thinking about nothing: stupid and unhappy: figures seemed to flit before her without conveying any meaning to her senses. She neither knew nor asked herself why she had chosen this way by the stream, instead of taking the straight road home through the forest. Some instinct had suggested that by taking this way she was less likely to meet any one.

Walking quickly, the keen wind made her cheeks tingle and seemed gradually to clear the fog out of her head. She had heard girls, and women too, boast about the number of men who had 'asked' them, and she knew that some of them had even multiplied the number for their own exaltation. They all considered it a thing to be proud of, and the more disappointments they had caused, the merrier they were. Why, then, should she take on so because she had been obliged to say 'no' to one man? She ought rather to be sorry that it was only one. Of course there was something in Caleb different from the other lads who had come about her, and who would have been ready enough to put the great question if she had shown any willingness to listen to it. She had not done so, and they had caused her no bother. But then she could not deny to herself that she had given Caleb reason to think that she was willing; and she liked him—liked him very much. That was why she was distressed, as she had told Madge.

And what was the phantom in her brain which had rendered it necessary to cause so much worry to Caleb and herself? . . . She would not admit that there was any phantom. She was quite sure of it (and there was an unconscious toss of the head at this point); and her refusal meant no more than that she did not care enough for him. Surely that was reason enough for saying 'no' without seeking for any other. And yet this satisfactory

answer to her own question made her the more uneasy with herself, because she was conscious that she was shirking the whole truth.

She passed out from under the shadow of the willows at a point where a broken branch of a huge old elm had formed an archway, and a little farther on was the ford, where a shaky wooden foot-bridge crossed the water leading to the door of the squat white alehouse where thirsty carriers felt bound to halt. Unlike most other wayside inns, its glory had not been completely destroyed by the railways. The walls were kept white. The old thatch-roof was neatly trimmed and carefully patched wherever age or the elements rendered patching requisite, so that it presented a fine study of variegated greens and browns, with here and there a dash of bright yellow. The inside was clean and tidy; and in cold weather there was always a cheerful blaze in the big fireplace. The secret of this pleasant condition of the *Ford Inn* was that the tenant farmed a bit of the contiguous land, on which he depended more than on the profits of his excellent 'home-brewed.'

The road southward from the ford passed the gates of Ringsford Manor. Going in that direction, Coutts Hadleigh was crossing the foot-bridge when Pansy reached the elm, and at sight of him she halted under the broken branch. The colour came back to her cheeks for an instant and left them paler than before. She had often heard of the pitfalls which beset the steps of maidens who lift their eyes too high; but she was incapable of nice arguments about the proper level of sight for one in her position. He had said many pretty things to her, always asked a flower from her, and at the harvest-home he had danced with her more than with any of the other girls. She was pleased; and now she owned that she had more than once wondered, when the Manor carriage with the ladies passed and she was courtesying by the wayside, how she would look if sitting in their place.

But that admission under the light of this day's experience revealed an ugly possibility, and taught her the alphabet of a disagreeable lesson in life.

She waited until Coutts had got some distance from the ford; then she crossed the road, and entering a ploughed field, hurried homeward, keeping close by the hedge, as if afraid to be seen.

Her father was kneeling on the hearth lighting the fire, his thin cheeks drawn into hollows as he blew the wood into flame.

'That you, Pansy?' (poof). 'What ails you the day' (poof), 'that there's neither fire nor' (poof) 'dinner for me when I come in frae my work?'

A series of vigorous 'poofs' followed. Pansy, whilst quickly relieving him of his task and arranging the table, explained what had happened in the washhouse, and how Miss Heathcote had taken her to the doctor.

'Oh, you were wi' her,' said the gardener, paying little attention to her accident. 'I thought you might have been awa wi' some other body, for I never knew women-folk neglectin' the dinner exceptin' in cases o' courtin' or deen.'

Most men would have been in a temper on returning hungry from work and finding that

the fire had to be lighted to heat the food ; but Sam having been rarely subjected to such an experience, and being under the impression that he was soon to be left to look after himself entirely, accepted the present position calmly, as a foretaste of what was coming.

'And you have had nothing yourself,' Pansy. Aweel, I'm no astonished. I daresay your mother whiles wanted her dinner when she was thinking about me.'

Sam, finding dinner a hopeless achievement, began, with customary deliberation, to fill and light his pipe. His daughter's short answers he attributed to the natural shyness in the presence of her father of a maiden who was expecting soon to become a wife.

'I ken what you are thinking about, Pansy ; but I'm no going to say a word on the subject at this time of day. There's another matter to speak about.'

What relief she felt ! How gladly she put the question :

'What's that, father ?'

'There's news come of your gran'father. He is bad wi' the rheumatics again, and no a creature to look after him. I'm thinking we'll have to make a journey over to Camberwell, and see what can be done for him, since he'll no come to us here.'

'I will go to him to-day,' she ejaculated with surprising energy ; 'and I can take that stuff the doctor sent for you ; and I can stay with him and nurse him until he is able to get about again.'

'Hooly, hooly,' cried Sam, taking the pipe out of his mouth and staring at his daughter. 'Kersey doesna bide in the town, though he works there.'

'I don't want to see him at all ; I want to go to grandfather,' she answered. But it was not entirely anxiety on account of that relative which prompted the desire to visit Camberwell, although her affection for the old man was strong enough to make her eager to nurse him. She also saw in this temporary exile the opportunity to escape from surroundings which were threatening to mar all her chances of happiness.

'And what am I to do when ye're awa ?'

'You can go up to the House for your meals, or you can get them ready for yourself, as you have done before. We cannot leave grandfather alone.'

'True enough, true enough, my lass ; and I suppose you'll need to go. You'll maybe do the auld man some good. It would be the saving o' him, body and soul, if you could get him to sup parritch and drink a wee thing less. You can take him some flowers ; but it's a pity that you cannot have aye of the new geraaniums for him.'

So that was settled ; and Pansy had never thought there would come a day when she would prepare eagerly to leave home.

When Madge heard of the mission which called Pansy away from the cottage for a time, she felt as well pleased as if fortune had bestowed some good gift upon her. She saw in it something like a providential rescue of the girl from a dangerous position ; and the readiness with which the summons had been obeyed was a guarantee that no great mischief had been done yet. Away

from Ringsford, with change of scenes and faces, and with new duties of affection to perform, the best qualities of her nature would be brought into action, whilst she would have leisure enough to arrive at a clear understanding of her own feelings. It was a pity that the old man should be ill ; but it was lucky for Pansy—and probably for Caleb—that this call should have been made upon her.

She had made no sign to her friend ; and it was not until Madge arrived at the gardener's cottage on the following afternoon that Pansy's sudden departure became known to her. It was odd that she had not even left a word of good-bye with her father for one who, she was aware, would be anxious about her. But the folly, whatever it might be, which had for the time so altered the girl's simple nature would be the more easily forgotten if there were no speech about it. Evidently Sam was still ignorant of the fact that Caleb had spoken and received a refusal. Madge hoped that they would soon have good news of Pansy and her patient.

'I daresay we'll hear about them in twa or three days ; but it's little good she can do her gran'father. He's a stupid auld body ; and as soon as he gets on his feet again, he'll just be off trailing round the town, making-believe to be selling laces and things ; but that's no what takes him about.'

'What, then ?'

'Singing bits o' sangs and making a fool of himself' at public-houses, for the treats he gets from folk that ought to know better, replied the gardener, shaking his head gloomily. 'I havena much hope for him ; but I was aye minded to gie him another chance ; and as it was to be given, the sooner the better. Besides that, Pansy was most extraordinary anxious to get awa to him. If she could just fetch him here, something might be done for him.'

Madge sympathised with this kindly wish, and hoped it might be realised in spite of Sam's misgivings. Then she went on to the Manor.

#### ROYAL PERSIAN SHERBET.

UNDER this sounding title, most of us have a remembrance of a white effervescing powder, flavoured with essence of lemons, which in the summer-time was sold to us as children ; a large spoonful was stirred into a tumbler of water, cool or the reverse, and known to boys as a 'fizzer.' It is not to this mawkish draught we wish to draw the reader's attention, but rather to the real thing as used in Persia and throughout the East. Persian sherbet is a very comprehensive term, and there are many varieties of it. Before we come to what it is, it may be as well to explain when and how it is drunk. Sherbet is used as a thirst-quencher, and a cooling drink in hot weather ; it is either the drink taken at meals, or it is handed to visitors in warm weather in lieu of coffee. As a drink at meals, it is placed in Chinese porcelain bowls, there being usually several varieties of the sherbet, more or less, according to the size of the party and the position of the host. Each bowl stands in its saucer ; and

across the vessel is laid one of the pear-wood spoons of Abadeh, famed for their carving and lightness throughout the Eastern world.

A sherbet spoon is from one to two feet in length; the bowl, cut from a solid block, holds from a claret-glass to a tumbler of the liquid. This bowl is so thin as to be semi-transparent, and is frequently ornamented with an inscription, the letters of which are in high-relief. To retain their semi-transparency, each letter is undercut, so that, although standing up an eighth of an inch from the surface of the bowl, yet the whole is of the same light and delicate texture, no part thicker than another. One-half of the surface of the spoon-bowl is covered by two cleverly applied pieces of carved wood, which appear to be carved from one block. But this is not the case—they are really cemented there. These pieces are carved in such a delicate manner as to be almost filmy in appearance, resembling fine lacework. The handle of the spoon—at times twenty inches long—is formed in a separate piece, and inserted into the edge of the bowl in a groove cut to receive it. This handle is also elaborately carved in delicate tracery; and a wonderful effect is produced by the rhomboid-shaped handle, at times four inches broad at the widest part, and only a tenth of an inch thick. The groove where the handle is inserted into the edge of the bowl of the spoon, and the point of junction, are hidden by a rosette of carved wood, circular in shape, only a tenth of an inch thick. This, too, is carved in lacelike work, and it is cemented to the shaft of the spoon. A kind of flying buttress of similar delicate woodwork unites the back-part of the shaft to the shoulder of the bowl. The spoon, which when it leaves the carver's bench is white, is varnished with *Kaman* oil, which acts as a waterproof and preservative, and dyes the whole of a fine gamboge yellow similar to our boxwood. The weight of the spoon is in the largest sizes two ounces.

The tools used by the carver are a plane, a rough sort of gouge, and a common penknife. Each spoon is of a separate and original design, no two being alike, save when ordered in pairs or sets. The price of the finest specimens is from five to fifteen shillings each. These sherbet spoons are really works of art, and are valued by oriental amateurs. Many of the merchants are very proud of their sherbet spoons; and being wood, they are 'lawful;' for a metal spoon, if of silver, is an abomination; consequently, the teaspoons in Persia have a filigree hole in the bowl, and thus can be used for stirring the tea only, and not for the unlawful act of conveying it to the mouth in a *silver* spoon. Of course, these high-art sherbet spoons are only seen at the houses of the better classes, a coarser wooden spoon being used by the lower classes. The spoons at dinner serve as drinking-vessels, for tumblers are unknown; and the metal drinking-cups so much in use are merely for travelling, or the pottle-deep potations of the irreligious.

During the seven months of Persian summer, it is usual to serve sherbet at all visits, in lieu of coffee, for coffee is supposed to be heating in the hot afternoons, at which time formal visits are often made; and as the visitor must be given something—for he is never sent empty away—

sherbet in glass tankards or *istakans*—a word borrowed from the Russian term for a tumbler—is handed round. These *istakans* are often very handsome, being always of cut or coloured glass, often elaborately gilded and painted in colours, or what is termed jewelled—that is, ornamented with an imitation of gems.

And now, what is Persian sherbet? A draught of sweetened water flavoured to the taste of the drinker. The only exception to this definition is the *sherbet-i-kand*, or *eau sucrée*, which is simply water in which lump-sugar has been dissolved. The varieties of sherbet may be divided into those made from the fresh juice of fruit, which are mixed with water and sweetened to the taste; and those made from sirup, in which the juice of fruit has been boiled.

It will be thus seen that the effervescing qualities of royal Persian sherbet only exist in the imagination of the English confectioner. But there is one all-important point that the English vendor would do well to imitate: Persian sherbet is served very cool, or iced. Blocks of snow or lumps of ice are always dissolved in the sherbet drunk in Persia, unless the water has been previously artificially cooled. Fresh sherbets are usually lemon, orange, or pomegranate; and the first two are particularly delicious. The fresh juice is expressed in the room in the presence of the guest, passed through a small silver strainer, to remove the pips, portions of pulp, &c.; lumps of sugar are then placed in the *istakan*; water is poured in till the vessel is two-thirds full, and it is then filled to the brim with blocks of ice or snow.

The preserved sherbets are generally contained in small decanters of coloured Bohemian glass similar to the *istakans* in style. They are in the form of clear and concentrated sirup. This sirup is poured into the bowl or *istakan*, as the case may be; water is added; the whole is stirred; and the requisite quantity of ice or snow completes the sherbet.

When bowls are used—as they invariably are by the rich at meals, and by the poor at all times—the spoons are dipped into the bowl, and after being emptied into the mouth, are replaced in the bowl of sherbet. Thus the use of glass vessels, until lately very expensive in Persia, is dispensed with. Probably with the continuous introduction of the ugly and cheap, but strong and serviceable, Russian glass, the dainty sherbet-spoon of Abadeh will gradually disappear, the more prosaic tumbler taking its place.

One kind of sherbet is not a fruit-sirup, but a distilled water; this is the *sherbet i-beed-mishk*, or willow-flower sherbet. The fresh flowers of a particular kind of willow are distilled with water; a rather insipid but grateful distilled water is the result. Of this, the Persians are immoderately fond, and they ascribe great power to it in the 'fattening of the thin.' It is a popular and harmless drink, and is drunk in the early morning, not iced, but simply sweetened.

Persians are very particular as to the water they drink, and are as great connoisseurs in it as some Englishmen are curious in wines. The water they habitually drink must be cool, and if possible, from a spring of good repute. It is often brought long distances in skins daily from



the favourite spring of the locality. Given good water, and pleasant, grateful beverages of all sorts, it is easy to refrain from the strong drinks which Mohammed so wisely forbade his followers to indulge in, making drunkenness a crime, and the drunkard an object of disgust and loathing to his fellow-man. Undoubtedly, strong drinks in hot climates, or even in hot weather, are incompatible with good health.

The varieties of the preserved sirups are numerous: orange, lemon, quince, cranberry—the raspberry is unknown in Persia—cherry, pomegranate, apricot, plum, and grape juice; while various combinations of a very grateful nature are made by mixing two or even three of the above.

### TERRIBLY FULFILLED.

#### IN FOUR CHAPTERS.—CHAPTER II.

THE auctioneer looked at his watch. Past three o'clock in the morning. He went into the hall, put on his hat, softly opened the front-door, and went out. He was going to make a visit of inspection which no amount of distress would have induced him to omit before retiring to rest. The house was a corner one, turning a dead wall to the side-street which ran out of the square. Turning down this street, he stopped at a low door at the further extremity of the house, having a massive iron handle and a small keyhole. Taking a key from his pocket, he turned it in the lock, twisted the handle round, and, exerting his strength, drew the door towards him. It was then to be seen that this door, though to outward view consisting of nothing stronger than wood, was of massive steel within—was, in fact, a thief-proof door. The idea was an original one. Our brethren who follow the honourable profession of burglary find, we are told, little difficulty in dealing with matters of this nature, however skilfully constructed and widely advertised, if only they can be secure from interruption. The mere fact that safes and strong-room doors are always to be found *inside* a building, affords to the burglar this very security. Once within and alone, with the long hours of night before him, he can go about his work in a leisurely and scientific fashion, with at least a fair chance of success. But it had occurred to the auctioneer that if the door were made to open directly upon the street, it would be extremely difficult for the most daring and experienced cracksmen to prosecute to a successful conclusion, at the momentary risk of detection, a labour of several hours, requiring the employment of numerous tools. Besides which, the police being aware of the existence of the door, the constable on the beat was accustomed to examine it carefully whenever he passed; so that if any attempt to force it had been made since the last inspection, he could not fail to detect the fact immediately.

The auctioneer stepped through the doorway and shut the door behind him. Striking a match, he lit the candle in a small lantern which he carried; and it was then evident that, supposing our burglar to have forced the outer door, he would so far have found little to reward his

pains, for a second strong-door at some distance from the first required to be opened also. This done, the interior of the safe was seen. It was a small room, about ten feet square, entirely without access to the house, the walls and vaulted ceiling strongly constructed of stone. Its only furniture was a small table and chair, and a nest of drawers clamped to the wall. Close by this, reaching from the floor to the spring of the arch, was what appeared to be a dingy, full-length portrait of a gentleman of the time of Charles II., in a tarnished gilt frame. On inspection, this picture looked as if painted on panel; but if sounded with the knuckles, it was found to be of a different material—solid metal.

Most men, especially rich men, have a hobby. Mr Cross had two. They were, first, diamonds; secondly, mechanics. His trade was not of the ordinary class; and he, with one or two other firms, had practically a monopoly of it in London. He dealt only in precious stones, jewellery, valuable pictures, and such-like articles. To his rooms, pawnbrokers sent their unredeemed pledges of this kind for sale by public auction, as the law directs. Where it was necessary, under the terms of a will, to dispose of family plate and jewellery, the executors were generally advised to retain the services of Mr Cross. Should the more valuable and less bulky effects of the Right Honourable the Earl of Englethorpe ever come to the hammer, as sometimes appeared to that nobleman to be a not quite impossible occurrence, it was by no means unlikely—such is the irony of fate—that Mr Cross would wield the fatal hammer. In this way it happened that the auctioneer, being brought into business contact with dealers in precious stones, enjoyed opportunities of gratifying his passion for diamonds at a cost which would have astounded the general public, who are accustomed to shop-window prices. During some twenty years, he had expended in this way over thirty thousand pounds, and had destined his collection to form a *parure* for his daughter on her marriage, which should at least equal that of any duchess in the three kingdoms. And it contributed not a little to his grief, that the possibility of her ever coming to wear those diamonds seemed to be but a very remote one.

For the protection of the fruits of his first hobby, his second had come into play. In his youth, when the choice of a trade or profession had been offered to him by his father—also an auctioneer with a large business—he had elected to be a mechanical engineer. He had accordingly been apprenticed to an eminent firm, and had gone through the drudgery exacted from all, without distinction of class or means, who enter that profession, in which there is no royal road to learning. He had developed such ingenuity and ability, that there would have been no difficulty about a future partnership, when his father died suddenly. It was highly advisable that the business, a large and lucrative one, should be carried on. Young Cross, with that decision of character which marked him through life, instantly determined to abandon engineering and adopt his father's trade, which prospered in his hands until it reached its present dimensions. But he never wasted anything; and he turned his mechanical knowledge and skill to such



purpose by way of recreation, that amongst other sources of wealth he was the owner of several valuable patents of his own invention. He had a small workshop and forge fitted up in the rear of his house, and here he was accustomed often to occupy himself in the evening and early morning. It was his only amusement; for of books he was wont to say, and believe, that they were but the brains of other men, and of little use to a man who had brains of his own.

His next proceedings will show how he had turned his mechanical genius to account for the safe keeping of his diamonds. Any person opening the drawers in the nest would have found them full of old papers, and would also have found that they would not come entirely out of their places. Opening, however, the third drawer from the top, the auctioneer pulled at it strongly, until it came out with a sharp snap, exposing the opening into which it fitted. The back of this drawer was a movable flap, working on hinges, and retained in its place by a powerful spring, so that it required a considerable exertion of strength to extract the drawer from the nest. Putting his hand into the aperture, Mr Cross grasped an iron semicircular handle which fitted into a niche in the wall at the back of the drawers, and drew it towards him. As he did so, the seeming picture glided noiselessly away, leaving its frame surrounding a dark opening. Through this he passed into what was in effect a huge inner safe; a closet about four feet square by six in height, lined throughout with inch-thick steel, and within that again with four inches of fire-resisting composition contained in an iron skin. The sliding door was steel, very thick and massive, fastening with half-a-dozen spring catches, moving in a groove four inches in depth, and absolutely impervious to any one not acquainted with the machinery.

Every portion of this latter apparatus had been devised and constructed by the auctioneer with his own hands, and placed in position by him after the safe—made to his order by a famous maker—had been set up. The rest was a mere matter of stone-masonry, completed by ordinary workmen under his own eye; so that the secret was with him alone. Even now the whole has not been revealed. Prior to withdrawing the semicircular handle, it was necessary to turn it to the right, from a perpendicular to a horizontal position. Unless this were done, the act of pulling out the handle set in motion a clockwork apparatus, which at the end of thirty seconds released a heavy counterpoise, the effect of which was to close the sliding door of the inner safe smartly, and to throw out of gear the machinery which worked it. It could then only be opened by means of a second mechanical arrangement, connected with another handle which was concealed behind a block of stone in the wall near the roof. It is evident that any person entering the safe after opening the door, unless in possession of the second part of this secret, would be effectually trapped. His comrades, if any, would be unable to deliver him, and he would have to abide an ignominious capture. This device the auctioneer considered superior to any system of spring-guns or such-like vulgarities, which are almost as likely to injure the owner

as the thief. Against each side of the safe were piled ordinary deed-boxes, containing the various securities representing the bulk of his fortune; but against the side opposite to the door was an iron box weighing perhaps five hundredweight, and clamped firmly to the floor.

The auctioneer knelt down, and with a small key fastened to the handle of the larger one, opened the box, disclosing a number of jewel-trays. As he lifted them out one after the other, the light of the lantern twinkled upon the rare and valuable gems, of all sizes and shapes, which lay loose upon the satin cushions. He looked at them long and earnestly, counting them over and over again, and flashing the more precious of them to and fro against the light.

'Ay!' he muttered—'all for her—for little Amy. What use in them now? It's all over—all over and done with for ever.' But again came the thought that if Amy were to become a widow, she might wear the diamonds after all.

He closed and locked the box, rose from his knees, and went back to the nest of drawers outside. As he forced the handle into its place, the picture reappeared, and the sliding-door shut to with a click. Pushing back the movable flap, he insinuated the drawer into its place, replaced the papers taken from it, and closed it. Then, closing the inner strong-door, he stepped again into the street, shutting the outer door after him; and having satisfied himself that it was securely closed, went into the house and to bed, where he slept heavily, being quite tired out, until nearly ten o'clock in the morning.

Despite his vigils of the night before, Mr Cross was tolerably punctual to his eleven o'clock appointment at the rooms occupied by Captain Ferrard and his wife in Duke Street. That gentleman received him with smooth looks and fair words, for it was by no means his cue to be the first to quarrel. So he courteously hoped that Mr Cross was well, invited him to a seat, making no allusion to the fact that this was the first time they had met since the marriage, and then left his visitor to state the reason of his call.

'I'm a plain business man, sir,' said the auctioneer after a moment or two; 'and I've got little time to spare, so I'll come to the point at once. It seems, from what my daughter told me last night, that you and she don't get on quite so well together as you should.'

'Ay, ay!' said the captain carelessly. The demon within him was being aroused. He had not the slightest intention of allowing this tradesman to lecture him. The latter waited for some further remark, but none came.

'That isn't as it should be between man and wife, you know,' said he at last, somewhat nonplussed.

'I'll be as plain with you, Mr Cross, as you can possibly be with me,' said the captain, turning round suddenly so as to face his visitor. 'My wife has been complaining to you, it seems. Well, I suppose we have our trifling disagreements, like other couples, and scarcity of money does not tend to sweeten the temper—does it? I quite agree with you that this is not as it should be; but then, how few things are! Am I to suppose

that it is only on this subject that you wish to speak to me?'

'Don't be hasty,' replied Mr Cross. 'I'm not saying it's your fault, nor anybody's fault. I come to you in a friendly way, not to have words about it. I've been thinking the matter over a good deal since last night, and I've come to fancy things might somehow be arranged between us, after all.'

Ferrard pricked up his ears. 'Very good of you to say so,' he said politely.

'I don't say that I've quite thought it out, and I don't say what I will do, you understand, or what I won't. But no doubt there's a good deal of truth in your remark about money and temper. I'm a rough, cross-grained sort of fellow, and perhaps I may have been too quick over this affair. I'm afraid I wasn't too civil to you that day; and you must own you were a bit aggravating too. I only want my girl to be happy.'

'I assure you, Mr Cross,' said the captain, with engaging frankness, 'that in that respect we are entirely at one. I have every desire for your daughter's happiness—and, I may add, for my own; of course, in a secondary degree. But I have already pointed out to you, and you have been good enough to agree with me, that good temper and easy circumstances are intimately allied; and I think you will also admit that bad temper and happiness are entirely incompatible. And considering our respective tastes and habits, five hundred a year can scarcely be considered affluence.'

For all his desire to be conciliatory, he could not entirely repress the slight sneer which pervaded his tone and manner.

The auctioneer looked steadily and gravely at him as he replied: 'I daresay we shall find some way of getting rid of the inconvenience, sir. But I'm due in the City long before this, so I'll only say that I hope we shall be better acquainted, and we can't be that without seeing more of one another. What do you say to a bit of dinner at my house on Thursday and staying the night? Then you and I can talk this little matter over by ourselves, between man and man. I'm going out of town for a week on Friday; and if you don't mind, I'll arrange for Amy to meet me at London Bridge and keep me company—she looks as if a whiff of the sea wouldn't hurt her—and then, you know, you could think over any proposal I might make to you, alone and quietly; and tell me what you say to it, when we come back.'

The captain's heart leaped within him at these proposals. Pressing claims were at this moment hanging over him, which it seemed that he might now be able to meet. He could ask no fairer opportunity for captivating his father-in-law and so turning his dearth into plenty. So he responded to the invitation with great heartiness, professed himself delighted at the prospect of so pleasant a trip for his wife; and they shook hands and parted.

Mr Cross stood on the doorstep for a moment, deep in thought. His mind sadly misgave him. He mistrusted his power of dealing with this cool, sarcastic, easy-mannered vagabond, as he would have dealt with one of his own class. He shook his head as he walked away. If the man would but die!

That night, feeling weary and worn out, he thought he would indulge in a little tinkering of some sort in his workshop—to him a never-failing source of relaxation. For some time past he had been engaged in making a duplicate set of keys for the doors of the strong-room and the iron box which held the diamonds, as a useful precaution in case the originals should be lost or mislaid. So, after dinner, he put on his leathern apron and again set to work, pipe in mouth. When he had finished the work, he paid the usual evening visit to his diamonds, using the new keys. With a touch or two of the small file which he carried in his hand, he found that they fitted perfectly.

Amy had been the same day to her father in the City, all anxiety to learn the result of the interview, as her husband declined to tell her anything. Mr Cross had, as we know, but little to tell; he could only bid her, as before, keep a good heart, and it would all come right. He informed her of the arrangements which had been made for Thursday and Friday next, named the hour at which she was to meet him at London Bridge, and sent her away a little perplexed, but rejoicing greatly at the prospect of the trip, and trusting implicitly in her father's wisdom.

#### THE ART OF CONVERSATION.

CERTAIN things are supposed to come by the grace of nature and the free gift of providence; and the Art of Conversation is one of them. No one dreams of cultivating this art, either in its perfected form or in those rudiments which stand as a 'grammar in use for beginners;' that is—correct diction, just expression, that inflection of the voice which shall be eloquent without being theatrical, and that emphasis which shall be indicative without being exaggerated. People draw out their words into long tails or clip them into docked stumps; they loop them on to the other with a running chain of 'ers,' or they bite them off short, each word falling plumb and isolated, disconnected from all the rest; they let their labials go by the board, and bury their *rs* in the recesses of their larynx; they throw the accent on the wrong syllable, and transform their vowels according to their liking; they say 'wuz' for 'was,' 'onnibus' for 'omnibus,' and 'y'are' for 'you are;' they shoulder out all the middle aspirates and some of the initial, and forget that words ending in 'ing' have a final *g* which is neither to be burked out of existence nor hardened into a ringing *k*. All which lingual misdemeanours they commit with a clear conscience and a light heart, because ignorant that they have committed any misdemeanour at all.

Even people of birth and breeding, who should be without offence in those matters, fail in their grammar, and say the queerest things in the world. 'These sort of things;' 'Who have you asked?' 'Every one of them know you;' 'Between you and I;' 'Neither men or women;' 'No one' as the antecedent, and 'they' as the relative—these are just a few of the commonest errors of daily speech of which no one is ashamed, and to which were you to make a formal objection, you would be thought a pedant for your

pains, and laughed at when your back was turned. If these things are done in the green tree of method, what may not be looked for in the dry of substance? And sure it is that we find very queer things indeed in that dry of substance, and prove for ourselves how the Art of Conversation is reduced to its primitive elements, which few give themselves the trouble to embellish, and fewer still to perfect.

To begin at the beginning, how seldom people pay undivided attention to the conversation on hand, and how often their thoughts wander and stray everywhere but where they should be! The most absurd, the most trivial, thing distracts them. A spider on the wall breaks the thread of an entralling narrative, and a butterfly on the lawn breaks into the gravest, or the most poetic, talk as ruthlessly as the proverbial bull smashes into the proverbial china-shop. Another alumnus in the same school, though of a different class, will not let you speak without interruption. Like a cockerel, spurring and springing at its brother, this kind dashes at you with an answer before you have half stated your case. 'You mean this?' he says, performing that feat called 'taking the words out of your mouth.' And forthwith he begins his refutation of that which you have not said and probably had no intention of saying. Another will not wait until you have finished. His words cross and intermingle with yours in hopeless confusion of both sound and sense. You both speak together, and neither listens to the other—you, because you 'have the floor,' and he, because he wishes to have it. Conversation with such is impossible. It is a battle of words—mere words—like a heap of loose stones shot pell-mell out of a cart; and not that orderly interchange of ideas which is what true conversation should be.

Others, cousins-german to these, interfere in talk with which they have no business. They do not join in; thus enlarging the basis and enriching the superstructure; but they break in with something quite irrelevant, destroying the most interesting discussion on the most puerile pretence, as a feather whisk might knock down a Sevres vase. This form of bad-breeding is much in use among women when they are jealous, and want to make themselves unpleasant to each other. The poet or the lord, the bishop or the general, that grand name or this great fortune—the man who is the feminine cynosure and whose attention confers distinction—is talking to some one singled out from the rest. He has to be detached and made to transfer himself. Accordingly, one of the boldest of the discontented outsiders goes up to the charge, and in the midst of a talk on literature, art, politics, on his travels or her experiences, cuts in with a question about the next flower-show or the last murder; with Who? What? When? How? no nearer to the subject on hand than the moon is near to Middlesex. This is an offence of daily occurrence, even among well-bred people—human nature having the ugly trick of breaking out of the delicate swaddling-clothes in which education and refinement would fain confine it.

Sometimes your interlocutor is a mother abnormally occupied with her children, and unable for two consecutive minutes to free her

thoughts from the petty details of their lives. She does not even pretend to listen to what you are saying. All the time you are speaking, her eyes are wandering about the room, to make sure that Tom is not forgetting his manners, and that Jane is not making holes in hers—that Frank is where he should be, and Sarah not where she should not be—that Edith is not talking too much, and that Charley is not talking too little: it does not matter what she is anxious about, seeing that if it be not one thing it will be another. And you need not be offended, nor take her inattention as a slight special to yourself. The Golden-mouthed himself could not fix her thoughts, wandering as they always are over the pathless spaces of her maternal fear. She is one of the most disagreeable of the whole tribe of the conversational awkward-squad. You have nothing for it but to stop dead—in the midst of a sentence, if need be—until she has brought her roving eyes back to the point which presupposes attention, and appears to be conscious that you are speaking to her.

Others yawn in your face with frank and undisguised weariness; and some put up the transparent screen of a fan or two fingers; others, again, make that constrained grimace which accompanies the eating and the swallowing of the yawn, and think that their sudden gulp and hesitation will pass unobserved. Some give wrong answers, with their eyes fixed on yours, as if listening devoutly to all you say, and absorbed in your conversation. They have mastered this part of the form, and can look as if drinking in to the last verbal drop. The reality is analogous to that condition of Baron Münchhausen's horse with which we are all familiar, and which we express by the phrase: 'Going in at one ear and out by another.' One who had learned this art of looking attention without giving it, once fell into a pit whence was no possible extraction. 'Do you call gentlemen in England It?' said an English-speaking German who thought his sweet companion had been entirely interested in his talk. Her eyes—and what eyes they were!—had been all he could desire—fixed, listening, interested. Meanwhile, her ears had been occupied elsewhere. At her back, on the ottoman where she was sitting, was being carried on a conversation in which she was deeply interested. Before her sat her German, labouring heavily among the stiff clay-clods of his imperfect English. Her answer to his remark betrayed the absence of the mind underneath all the steadfastness of her bewildering eyes. 'Do you call gentlemen in England It?' he repeated with mingled reproach, sorrow, and—enlightenment. That random answer to his previous question cost her the offer of a spray of orange blossom—and him the pain of its refusal.

Beyond these rudiments comes the higher art reaching into grace, and needing enlightened intelligence for its perfection. The section which we have been considering belongs only to the grammar, the beginning, the mere infancy of things, like the New Zealander's tattoo for personal decoration, or his hideous idol for representative art. Beyond the good-breeding of attention comes the supreme art, we had almost said the science of conversation—of all things



the most difficult, to judge by its rarity at least in England. It is more common in France, where it is better understood, and where a good conversationalist is prized as a Master in his own degree. And be it observed—a good conversationalist is not the same thing as a good anecdotist, a good debater, a good talker—this last too often sinning with Coleridge in monopolising all the talk to himself, and granting only some 'brilliant flashes of silence' wherein the ruck may have their innings. A good conversationalist, on the contrary, is essentially reciprocal. He flings his own ball, but he catches the return and waits for its throw. He has a light touch, and that kind of skill which glances off rather than hits fair and square. He has also the power of suggestiveness and direction, as perfect in its way as the skill with which certain adepts can make a ball wind in and out of stumps and stakes by the clever twist of their first throw off. He is not one of those who run a subject to earth and finish it all the same as one would finish a fox; but he keeps it alive and going with the neatest, deftest, little fillips possible—as the Japanese keep up their paper butterflies with airy puffs of their flimsy fans, or as a thaumaturgist guides his spinning-plates with the tip of his forefinger. When it is all over, and you ask yourself what you have got by it, you are forced to confess, Nothing. You have been superficially amused, and for the moment interested; but you have learned nothing, and are no richer mentally than you were before the verbal butterfly began to flutter and the wordy plate to spin.

We in England, however, know but little of this kind of talk. We have men who argue, and men who assert; and we have men, and women too, who come down with a thud on the toes of all whom they encounter in the various walks of conversation. But of the light bright thrust and parry, the brilliant quarte and tierce, the flashing 'pinked' and quick *riposte* characteristic of the palmy days of Parisian society, we have but very little. For foils we use bludgeons; for paper butterflies, leaden bullets. We are too much in earnest to be graceful, and too anxious about our subject to be careful of our method. Hence we have better dialecticians than conversationalists, and better fighters than fencers. But really, say, at a dinner, or in the crowded corners of a fashionable soirée, you cannot go into the mazes of 'evidences,' nor discuss the value of esoteric Buddhism, nor yet winnow your sheaf of political economy, beginning with Adam Smith and ending with Henry George. You can only play with words and toss up airy bubbles of ideas. And he who can play with most dexterity, and whose airy bubbles have the brightest iridescence, is the hero of the moment and the master of the situation.

As a rule, authors are but dull dogs in conversation. They keep their good things for their books. Those who expect in literary society the feast of reason and the flow of soul, find themselves for the most part wofully disappointed. More is to be got out of the amateurist set—that fringe which would be if it could, and which hangs on to the main body as the best thing it can do in the circumstances.

But authors of the professional and bread-winning class will talk only of things already known, repeating what they have written, but taking care not to forestall what they have not yet printed. They, and all professionals of any denomination whatsoever, are also given to talk shop among themselves; and shop is usually disagreeable to the outsider.

We might do worse than cultivate Conversation as an Art. Time has room for all things in his hand, and life has need of variety. Desperately busy and terribly in earnest as we may be, blowing bubbles has yet its value. Moreover, the true art of conversation is a lesson in good-breeding, which, in its turn, is the *fine fleur* of civilisation; and thus, from the rootwork of manner to the efflorescence of matter, there is something to be gained by the perfection of the art.

## IN QUEER COMPANY.

### IN TWO PARTS.—PART I.

If the following account of what happened to me a few years ago serves no other purpose, it may pass muster as an illustration of two old sayings, namely, that 'One half of the world does not know how the other half lives,' and that 'Truth is often stranger than fiction.'

It was late on a very cold afternoon during the winter of 1876-77, that I was hurrying westward along the Marylebone Road, congratulating myself upon having turned my back upon the bitter east wind, and comparing the climate of London towards the end of December with that which I had been enjoying exactly twelve months previously, when at Calcutta, as one of the Special Correspondents with the Prince of Wales. I had got nearly as far as the Edgware Road, when a man touched his hat to me and asked me for the wherewith to get a night's lodging. He did not look like an ordinary or a professional beggar. His clothes, although very shabby, were evidently well made. He looked so pinched and weary, that I stopped and fumbled in the ticket-pocket of my overcoat for a sixpence to give him. He stared at me very hard indeed whilst I was getting the money, and as I handed it to him, broke out with an exclamation of wonder, asking me whether my name was not so-and-so. I replied that it was; and asked him where he had ever seen me before. To make a long story short, this poverty-stricken man asking alms on the public streets turned out to be a gentleman I had known many years before, when he was a captain in one of our crack lancer regiments, and had a private fortune of his own of more than fifteen hundred a year. When I had last seen him, he was a man of little over thirty; but was now on the wrong side of fifty; and owing to want, care, hunger, cold, and dirt, looked very much older. He had always been a very fast man. Betting, cards, and doing bills at sixty per cent, had worked out their legitimate ends upon him. I had lost all sight of him for fully twenty years, but remembered having heard that he had been obliged to sell out on account of his many debts. All this, and much more too, he related when he came to my house, as I had told him to do, and helped him as far as it was



in my power, with a little money and some old clothes.

When I asked him what he intended to do for the future, he said that if he could only get a decent outfit and a few pounds for travelling expenses, he had an opening in Paris that would soon put him on his legs again. It so happened that I knew slightly two or three men who had been in the same regiment with this individual; and of these there was one who was very well off. I therefore wrote out an appeal for the poor fellow, sent it to the different parties; and was greatly pleased when I found that instead of realising, as I had hoped, some ten or fifteen pounds, the contributions sent me came to upwards of thirty pounds. With this money I first got the unfortunate man a fairly good outfit of clothes, and then made over to him the balance left, about six pounds, to use as he liked. He was exceedingly grateful; and asked me to express his thanks to those who had responded so generously to my letters. It was about a fortnight after I had met him on the Marylebone Road that he called to bid me farewell, and to thank me again for all I had done, which, after all, was merely having written some half-dozen letters, and taken a little trouble in getting his clothes as good and as cheap as I could. He told me that he was leaving for Paris that evening.

For five or six months I neither saw nor heard anything about him. At the end of that time I received a note from this individual, telling me he was in London, saying he would like to see me, and giving me his address at a respectable hotel near Leicester Square. I wrote an answer; and as I happened to be going into the neighbourhood, called at the hotel, intending to leave it there. But as the waiter told me that the gentleman was at home, and was then writing in the coffee-room, I went there, and found my former acquaintance, who seemed delighted to see me. He had evidently prospered since I last saw him. He was well, if perhaps somewhat flashily dressed; had what seemed to be a valuable pin in his neck-scarf, a thick gold chain from one waistcoat pocket to another, and two or three rings on his fingers. He looked more like a Frenchman than an Englishman; and would certainly have passed a better muster at Brebant's or in the *Café du Helder* than he could have done in a London club. But what showed more plainly than anything else that he had done well, and what pleased me greatly, was that he there and then pulled out a roll of bank-notes and insisted upon repaying me what I had collected for him from his former friends. It was in vain that I protested that those gentlemen had parted with their money as a gift and not as a loan; that I did not know where to find them at present; and that I begged he would not think of repaying me the small portion I had contributed to the amount. No; nothing would serve him but to make me take the money and to give it back as best I could to those who had assisted him in his great distress.

As a matter of course, I was very curious to know by what means he had, in some measure at anyrate, recovered his position in the world; or how he had managed to fill his empty purse. But to all my questions he gave the most evasive

answers. Remembering what his pursuits used to be long ago, I felt certain that he had got into some lucky vein of play or of betting, and that he was making a living either by cards or on the racecourse. But after a few days' observation of what he did, I was sure that I was labouring under a mistake. Just at that time of the year several of our great race-meetings were in full swing; but he never went near any of them; nor did he ever attempt to go back amongst the men who had been his companions long ago. I offered to get his name put down as an honorary or visiting member of one or two good clubs; but he invariably declined. When he asked me, as he often did, to dine with him, it was always at one or other of the best foreign restaurants in London. When I called on him at his hotel, he seemed to be always busy either writing or receiving letters. One night I looked him up about eleven p.m. on my way back from the theatre. But they told me at the hotel he always went out between nine and ten p.m., and seldom came back before the small-hours of the morning.

In London, a busy man has little or no time to think of any one's affairs except his own; but I confess that this gentleman used often to puzzle me not a little. His seeming prosperity in money matters as compared with his former circumstances, and the singular life he led, caused me often to wonder what were the sources whence he derived his income, my curiosity being not a little increased by his evident desire to keep me in the dark as to the truth of the case. But the solution of a difficult social problem almost invariably comes to hand when least expected, and this case was no exception to the rule.

I had not seen my friend for some two or three weeks, when I received a note asking me to call upon him, as he had met with a bad accident and was confined to his bed. I accordingly went to see him; and found that he had slipped upon the street, had injured his knee somewhat severely, and was suffering great pain. He had called in a surgeon, who had ordered the most perfect rest for at least ten days or a fortnight; and having no other friend in London of whom he could ask a favour, he begged me to help him in certain matters of business which could not be neglected. As a matter of course, I offered to be of any service I could to him; and he said that the first favour he would ask of me was to go to a small news-agent near Soho Square and ask for any letters directed to 'T. D.; to be left till called for.'

I did so; and found there four letters so addressed, all bearing French post-marks, and took them to him at the hotel. He opened them with evident eagerness, and read them with an anxiety which he could not disguise from me, although he very evidently tried his best to do so. The contents of these communications seemed to give him great annoyance. After a short time, during which he seemed deep in thought, he wrote out a curious, mysterious advertisement, such as we read almost every day in the 'Agony column' of the *Times*, and asked me to get it inserted in three of the chief morning papers. I read what he had written, and wondered not a little what he meant. In the advertisement, 'Adventure' was requested to

'keep dark until Phillip wrote.' The sick man saw me smile as I read it, and looked very anxious and embarrassed, assuring me that there was no harm whatever in the hidden meaning of the notice. Having work of my own to attend to, I left him, saying I would call again the next day. But he begged so earnestly for me to come before post-time, that I consented to do so. He told me that he did not like intrusting his letters to the people of the hotel, who were either very curious or extremely neglectful on all such matters. I therefore returned in the afternoon, when he handed me two letters, which he asked me to post. They were both addressed to Paris, to persons with French-like names, and were to be left *poste restante* at different post-offices. The next day but one he asked me to go to the same small news-agent near Soho Square and ask for any letters that might be there for him. I found two, and brought them to him. He read them with great eagerness; and again wrote two letters, which he asked me to post for him, evidently not caring to trust the people of the hotel with his correspondence. This went on almost every day. On one occasion, he took out of one of the letters I brought him a draft from a Paris bank upon one in London for one hundred pounds payable to 'T. C. Dane, or order.' He indorsed it, and asked me to get it cashed for him, which I did. He evidently saw that I was not only puzzled as to what his mysterious business could be, but that I had serious thoughts of not coming near him again until I found out whether my doing so would compromise myself. And apparently acting upon a sudden impulse, he all at once opened out and made what I may call his confession to me.

'For some time past,' he began, 'I have seen that you wonder what my business is, and why I am so mysterious with regard to what I do and what I write. Well, I will now make a clean breast of it.'

He then told me that some two or three years previously, he had got into what he called 'worse than a mess' in Paris. He had somehow got mixed up with a gang of card-sharpers, without knowing to what an extent they carried on their dishonest practices, and had so far compromised himself, that the French police had him at their mercy. They had, however, let him off, holding over him the power they had to prosecute him at any future time, should they think he deserved it. But they made certain conditions with him; and these were, that he should go to London, and furnish them from time to time with all the information he could gather respecting certain receivers of goods, stolen in France, who resided in this metropolis. In order to do this the more effectually, he had managed not only to get acquainted with the leaders of a gang which worked for their friends in Paris, but he had also got himself received as one of them, and used to go to their meetings almost every night. The work, as he told me, had been most unpleasant, but it was nearly at an end; and the French police had promised that he should very soon be altogether free from his engagements with them.

To mix with people of whom little or nothing is known, and to penetrate into places which are hidden from the generality of mankind, has

always had a great charm for me. Mr Dane was not a little surprised when, instead of leaving him after I had heard his story, I told him he would do me a great favour if he took me to a meeting of his dishonest friends; and that I would pledge myself never to give any information that might lead to a single member of the band getting into trouble. After making some objections to my request, he at last consented; and said that the first night he could get out he would go to the meeting of the gang by himself, but would then make arrangements for me to accompany him the following evening. And thus it was that I managed to get into very 'queer company.'

If any one was to offer me one hundred pounds to show him where the place in which the thieves and receivers of stolen goods is or was situated, I could not do so, even if it was honourable to divulge what I had promised faithfully to keep secret. This much I may say, that having dined in the Strand, we walked up Catherine Street, and turned to the right when we came to the court that flanks the south side of Drury Lane Theatre. Here my companion stopped, took out of his pocket a pair of spectacles, and said I must put them on before he could take me any farther. I did as he desired; and found the glasses to be so dark that I could not see an inch beyond my nose. My friend laughed; and linking his arm in mine, said he would conduct me safely; but that he was obliged to make it a point I should not be able to recognise the streets we passed through, even if I wanted to do so. As near as I could guess, we took some ten minutes to reach our destination, after I had put on the glasses. My companion then stopped, knocked in a peculiar manner at a street door, told me to take off the spectacles, and led me through what seemed to be a coffee-shop of the most humble kind. In a large room beyond this, there were seated six or seven men, who were not by any means all of the same type. Two or three were evidently Frenchmen, and were talking together with the usual volubility of their nation. The rest were scattered here and there. All were smoking. Some had cups of tea or coffee before them, whilst others seemed to be indulging in spirits-and-water. My companion was greeted by all present as a friend they had been waiting for and were glad to see. He introduced me to the party assembled as 'one of us, just come from Paris.' No questions were asked, nor, beyond one or two civil inquiries, was any particular notice taken of me. I was asked what I would drink, offered my choice of cigars or cigarettes; and then the meeting commenced to discuss, in an informal kind of manner, the business which had brought those present together.

From what I could gather, it seemed that there had been, a few days before, a robbery of valuable jewels in Paris; and that the difficulty of those connected with the affair was to get the plunder safely over to the United States. The London police had been put on the alert; but the thieves—or shall I call them the agents and helpers of thieves?—did not seem to fear them. They discussed very freely the relative merits of the French and English detective systems; saying, that in cases of housebreaking and murders, the latter rarely failed to bring the offenders to justice; but

that in cases of clever 'plants,' the former were much more to be feared.

'You never know,' said one Englishman present, with a round oath, 'where or when you may come across those horrible French spies. Why, we might have here, in the very midst of us, some one who is in their pay.'

I thought to myself how little these fellows knew that my friend who had introduced me into the room belonged to the very tribe whom they feared so much. But of the United States they spoke in the highest terms; or in very much the same manner that an artisan who could not earn the wherewith to pay for dry bread in this country, might praise some place in the Far West where industry was certain to gain an honest living. From what I gathered, it would seem that whenever a robbery on a large scale is carried out, the first object of those concerned is to get 'the swag' out of the country as soon as possible. Thus, the produce of a plunder in Paris is almost invariably taken to London, and *vice versa*. If the thieves can so arrange beforehand as to get away from where the theft has been committed within a few hours of the completion of their handiwork, they believe themselves to be all but safe, or at least the chances are about five to one in their favour. If they have the luck to get clear of Europe and safely land in America, the chances are that they will get clear altogether, realise a good price for their plunder, and make things pleasant all round. The United States, as I said before, is a capital country to go to; but South America is still better. In neither of these parts are many questions asked; but in the latter country the prices given are higher than in the north, and sales are more readily effected. In London, the market for jewelry is by no means good; for, as a rule, the stones have to be taken out of the setting; and the latter has to be secreted or instantly melted, else the police are pretty certain to get scent of the affair.

It must not be thought that those composing the very singular company amongst whom I found myself were at all in the burglar line. I don't believe that there was a single house-breaking implement to be found amongst them. From all I gathered, they were the receivers, and not the actual robbers, of valuable goods. They talked together of their common pursuit much in the same manner that so many brokers might converse respecting the fluctuations of the Stock Exchange, or a party of farmers might give their opinions respecting the coming corn or other crops. What surprised me most was the manner in which the company, one and all, spoke of what they called their 'business,' as if it was of the most legitimate kind; and I feel certain that they would have resented warmly the words of any one who threw the shadow of a doubt upon the propriety of their occupation. In what they said of things in general, they all appeared to be very much of the same way of thinking; or, at any rate, they expressed themselves as holding very much the same views. On one subject only did I hear strong language expressed, and that was when one of them—who, from what he said, seemed to have come from France very recently—gave an account of the manner in which the Paris detectives had found out a certain robbery, and had brought those who had perpetrated the same

to justice. For individuals in the pay of the police, or rather who belonged to the same, to disguise themselves and mix with the individuals who were more or less 'wanted,' they regarded as 'low' and 'sneaking' in the extreme. They were unanimous in their opinion that if the French system of detecting robberies was ever introduced into England, this 'would no longer'—as one of the party expressed himself—'be a country for any honest man to live in.'

## HINTS FOR HOUSEWIVES.

So much information about everything is now so easily obtainable, that there is little excuse for enduring many of the small domestic worries to which housekeepers and others are often subjected. Why, for instance, need any one be inconvenienced by damp cupboards, when we read that a bowl of quicklime placed therein will speedily absorb the moisture? Some of us are nervous about beds not being well aired, and yet we have only to fill a large stone bottle with boiling water and put it into the bed, pressing the bolster and pillows round it in a heap. By this simple contrivance, it is comforting to learn, no one need fear giving a friend a damp bed, even if this is done only once a fortnight.

Flies are a familiar nuisance; but we are told of a foreign remedy in laurel oil, which, better than glass fly-catchers and others, will not only rid us of these 'pests,' but preserves looking-glasses and picture-frames when coated with it. Jane the 'help' should derive satisfaction from the assurance that beetles may be effectually got rid of by sprinkling once or twice on the floor a mixture of pure carbolic acid and water, one part to ten.

It is not frequenters of restaurants only who wonder why the simple precaution of throwing red pepper pods or a few pieces of charcoal into the pan—said to prevent odours from boiling-ham, cabbage, &c.—is not oftener observed. Cooks are further reminded that in roasting meat, salt should not be put upon the joint before it is put in the oven, as salt extracts the juice; and that lime-water will improve the condition of old potatoes in boiling.

Eggs could be purchased with greater confidence if the German method of preserving them by means of silicate of soda was generally followed. A small quantity of the clear sirup solution is smeared over the surface of the shell. On drying, a thin, hard, glassy film remains, which serves as an admirable protection and substitute for wax, oil, gums, &c.

Economy in housekeeping would be facilitated by the better observance of what are known in common parlance as 'wrinkles.' For example, why purchase inferior nutmegs, when their quality can be tested by pricking them with a pin? If they are good, the oil will instantly spread around the puncture. It is worth recollecting that bar-soap should be cut into square pieces, and put in a dry place, as it lasts better after shrinking. If we wish to keep lemons fresh for some time, we have only to place them in a jar of water and change it every morning. In selecting flour, we are advised to look to the colour. If it is white with a yellowish straw-colour tint, we should buy



it; but if it is white with a bluish cast, or with black specks, we should refuse it.

Broken china can be mended with a useful glutine made with a piece of old cheese mixed with lime; and the wooden palings of the garden may be preserved from the weather by coating them with a composition of boiled linseed oil and pulverised charcoal, mixed to the consistence of paint. In this way wood can be made to last longer than iron in the ground. If we consult our health, we should plant the garden with odoriferous plants such as wall-flowers, mignonette, and other old English flowers and herbs, which have a remarkable power of developing ozone and purifying the atmosphere from miasmatic poisons.

Amateur joiners may derive comfort from the knowledge that nails and screws if rubbed with a little soap are easily driven into hard wood. The same household commodity, of a fine white quality, if rubbed over new linen will enable it to be more easily embroidered, as it prevents the threads from cracking.

A deal of breakage amongst glass and crockery can be prevented by the simple precaution of placing lamp-chimneys, tumblers, and such articles in a pot filled with cold water to which some common table-salt has been added. Boil the water well, and then allow it to cool slowly. When the articles are taken out and washed, they will resist any sudden changes of temperature.

Crape may be renovated by thoroughly brushing all dust from the material, sprinkling with alcohol, and rolling in newspaper, commencing with the paper and crape together, so that the paper may be between every portion of the material. Allow it to remain so until dry.

A better plan for removing grease-spots than by applying a hot iron is to rub in some spirit of wine with the hand until the grease is brought to powder, and there will be no trace of it. Every schoolboy is not aware that ink-spots can be removed from the leaves of books by using a solution of oxalic acid in water; nor does every housemaid know that 'spots' are easily cleaned from varnished furniture by rubbing it with spirit of camphor.

The elasticity of cane-chair bottoms can be restored by washing the cane with soap and water until it is well soaked, and then drying thoroughly in the air, after which they will become as tight and firm as new, if none of the canes are broken.

Marks on tables caused by leaving hot jugs or plates there will disappear under the soothing influence of lamp-oil well rubbed in with a soft cloth, finishing with a little spirit of wine or eau-de-Cologne rubbed dry with another cloth. When the white pianoforte keys become discoloured, we should remove the front door, fall, and slip of wood just over them; then lift up each key separately from the front—do not take them out—and rub the keys with a white cloth slightly dampened with cold water, and dry off with a cloth slightly warm. Should the keys be sticky, first damp the cloth with a little spirit of wine or gin. Soap or washing-powder must not be used. It is worth while keeping a supply of ammonia in the household, in case we wish to remove finger-marks from paint, or require to cleanse brushes or greasy pans. A teaspoonful in a basin of warm water will make

hair-brushes beautifully white; but care must be taken not to let the backs of the brushes dip below the surface. Rinse them with clean warm water, and put in a sunny window to dry.

Egg-shells crushed into small bits and shaken well in decanters three parts filled with cold water, will not only clean them thoroughly, but make the glass look like new. By rubbing with a damp flannel dipped in the best whiting, the brown discolorations may be taken off cups in which custards have been baked. Again, are all of us aware that emery powder will remove ordinary stains from white ivory knife-handles, or that the lustre of morocco leather is restored by varnishing with white of egg?

Nothing, it is said, is better to clean silver with than alcohol and ammonia, finishing with a little whiting on a soft cloth. When putting away the silver tea or coffee pot which is not in use every day, lay a little stick across the top under the cover. This will allow fresh air to get in, and prevent the mustiness of the contents, familiar to hotel and lodging-house sufferers.

### A BLACKBIRD'S NEST.

BY ALEXANDER ANDERSON.

[In the month of May might be seen, at the Forth Bridge Works, South Queensferry, a blackbird sitting on her nest, which was built on an elevated projecting beam in the engineering shed, in close proximity to the driving-shaft, and immediately above a powerful steam-engine.]

SHE sits upon her nest all day,  
Secure amid the tolling din  
Of serpent belts that coil and play,  
And, moaning, ever twist and spin.

What cares she for the noise and whir  
Of clanking hammers sounding near?  
A mother's heart has lifted her  
Beyond a single touch of fear.

Beneath her, throbbing anvils shout,  
And lift their voice with ringing peal,  
While engines groan and toss about  
Their tentacles of gleaming steel.

Around her, plates of metal, smote  
And beat upon by clutch and strain,  
Take shape beneath the grasp of Thought—  
The mute Napoleon of the brain.

She, caring in nowise for this,  
But, as an anxious mother should,  
Dreams of a certain coming bliss,  
The rearing of her callow brood.

Thou little rebel, thus to fly  
The summer shadows of the trees,  
The sunlight of the gracious sky,  
The tender toying of the breeze.

What made thee leave thy leafy home,  
The deep hid shelter of the tree,  
The sounds of wind and stream, and come  
To where all sounds are strange to thee?

Thou wilt not answer anything;  
Thy thoughts from these are far away;  
Five little globes beneath thy wing,  
Are all thou thinkest on to-day.

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